Next Steps to Address Human Rights Abuses in Seafood Supply Chains
Meeting Summary
Feb. 10, 2015

1. Introduction and Purpose

Media outlets are increasingly covering human rights abuses in seafood supply chains. These abuses pose a significant risk to brand reputation, consumer trust, and assured supply for seafood businesses. They also undermine the sincere efforts of companies to improve procurement practices. On February 10th, six panelists examined the complexity of such issues during the plenary “Preventing Human Rights Abuses In Seafood Supply Chains” at the SeaWeb Seafood Summit in New Orleans. The panel summarized the conditions that allow human rights abuses to persist in the seafood industry, discussed the difficulties in improving labor issues in seafood supply chains, and provided suggestions for companies looking to strengthen the social components of their purchasing agreements.

Following the plenary, Humanity United, the Freedom Fund, and FishWise co-hosted a multi-stakeholder meeting to discuss next steps to address human rights abuses in seafood supply chains. It was attended by representatives from the seafood industry that have expressed interest in improving human rights within sustainable seafood, as well as representatives from the conservation community, funders, and key members of government. Building on the momentum from the human rights plenary, participants shared observations and reflections, discussed two topics that have risen to the top of recent discussions (tools & resources and pre-competitive discussions), and worked in small groups to identify next steps that would help to address these important issues. Given the diversity of participants, this interactive session focused on broadly gathering ideas, rather than choosing or prioritizing. All contributions were welcomed.

2. Human Rights Plenary: Reflections and Observations

To begin, participants reflected on the plenary and shared thoughts that surfaced for them during and after the session. A sample of impressions is below, and detailed observations are categorized by topic in Appendix I.

Impressions:

- Excited see stakeholders in the room that do not shy away from the facts and hopeful that conversation will lead to future work
- Impressed that this important issue was added to the Seafood Summit agenda
- Surprised that we can’t define the size of the problem and that it is so large
Inspired to reach out to suppliers and make sure things are happening as they should. Where to start?

- A year ago, the industry was in a totally different place but now there appears to be awareness and willingness to work on the issue – let’s move towards that.

### 3. Identification of Next Steps

Next, participants focused on two topics that have risen to the top of recent discussions: 1) tools and resources and 2) pre-competitive dialogue. Each small group selected a topic to discuss in and worked together to identify important considerations and next steps. Summarized results of those discussions are presented here. A detailed table with next steps for each proposed tool or resource is available in Appendix II.

**Tools and Resources:**

There is a growing awareness of human rights issues in seafood supply chains, but little consensus on what to do about it. Tools and resources are often helpful ways to share information and encourage action. Four potential tools and resources were identified during this discussion.

**a. Credible case studies from seafood and other industries**

Human rights and labor issues are not unique to seafood, and other industries (apparel, minerals, etc.) have worked extensively on these topics. Gathering examples of what worked and what did not from other industries will allow the seafood sector to learn quickly, create connections among commodities, and gain valuable expertise. Conversely, the globalized nature of the seafood industry, in combination with the lack of visibility of operations at sea, set the seafood industry apart from others. Developing case studies that document the human rights and labor issues specific to seafood supply chains will provide credible data and help align stakeholders working to address these issues.

**b. Build labor and social issues into seafood certifications**

Currently, some seafood certifications include some social and labor criteria and others do not. Current standards could be improved by evaluating labor, worker health and safety criteria within seafood certifications. Allowing stakeholders to use one certification tool may add value and improve ease of operation for the industry representatives that rely on them.

**c. Tool for identifying sources of high and low risk**

Greater transparency and traceability are needed globally across fisheries. Identifying social risks that are inherent to specific seafood sources or suppliers will help to improve monitoring efficiency, address gaps in data, and improve data collection where it is most needed. Incorporation of causes, locations, and mechanisms that lead to human trafficking, forced labor or other abuses into an assessment will help businesses to identify and manage social risks in supply chains.
d. Tools to align enforcement and monitoring efforts
Several tools were suggested to improve and align monitoring and enforcement of human rights and labor standards across government and agencies. Ideally, tools would encourage industry and government collaboration, improve traceability, and increase buying power. The following tools stood out as helpful: vessel manifest and checklist, electronic monitoring, consolidated hotline, observers trained in social standards, trusted trader program, contracts for laborers, and improved audit systems.

Pre-competitive Discussions:
Companies may be hesitant to speak publicly about their current efforts with regard to human rights in seafood or may not have a clear understanding of the steps they can take to address this issue. It may be helpful to start a pre-competitive dialogue among seafood businesses and industry actors who want a safe space to talk openly. Participants discussed replicating this model used in other industries (e.g. textiles) and how the seafood industry may develop solutions in such a dialogue. A summary of goals, pros, cons, participants, and next steps is available in Appendix III.

A pre-competitive dialogue would offer immediate access to current information, documentation, and diverse work streams throughout the industry. Information could be shared across international initiatives and partnerships, and may help each link in seafood supply chains educate each other about challenges and progress. Participants could share assessment tools, engage in collaborative efforts to leverage industry objectives, and communicate progress to consumers on human rights and labor issues.

4. Next Steps

This meeting was an important step in a series of conversations on how to address human rights abuses in the seafood industry. FishWise will follow up on this conversation by circulating this meeting summary, sharing priorities that were determined during a meeting of environmental NGOs, and organizing calls, webinars, and events to support continued discussion and collaboration. FishWise encourages interested parties to continue the momentum from this meeting in their work and introduce others who would add value to the conversation.

If interested parties that were not in attendance at the meeting would like to join the conversation or request a copy of the notes, please email humanrights@fishwise.org.
### Appendix I: Categorized Plenary Observations

#### Businesses Engagement
- Do we overestimate the impact of name and shame tactics for businesses? Is it not as big a concern for retailers?
- Disconnects exist between company engagement, identifying the problem, and having companies be transparent. The industry wants actionable steps and is frustrated about how to move forward without a clear roadmap about how to take action.
- Price does not reflect the true cost of seafood- more attention needs to be paid to this point. Price increase should come from industry and government, not the responsibility of the consumer. How do we motivate companies to change their buying practices and move beyond price point?

#### Government Action
- In NZ, the only thing that moved governments was shame – can a coordinated media strategy feed back into the process?
- How much legislation and regulation exists already that people are not aware of (e.g. CA Transparency in Supply Chain Act)? Can we leverage sustainable conversation?

#### Consumer Response
- Disappointed that the Thai shrimp issue did not induce outrage or consumer behavior change, and little visibility in U.S. news media. What if it had been the LA times and not the Guardian?
- Desensitization to doom and gloom stories aimed at consumers. Consumers think about themselves, their family, and their community first. Is Thailand too far away to worry about? Where is the “Pink Slime” of Human Rights abuses?
- Consumers have a lot of power but the industry and businesses can take the steps to remove concerns by doing the right thing.

#### Sustainability and Traceability
- Working on sustainability may not get to the root of the matter with labor abuses. What concrete steps will get us where we want to go?
- Investigating challenges in other commodities and supply chains may point towards solutions for the seafood industry
- It is still unclear if working on IUU will benefit labor issues. How does traceability work help - if at all?

#### Collaboration
- Human rights issues are very different than environmental problems - must engage other stakeholders and experts. How to bring human rights and labor stakeholders to the table?
- Pre-competitive dialogue and collective action are needed. UK retailers, food service, eNGOs, labor rights groups, etc. have all been working collectively, but it is not enough- need a bit more!
### Appendix II: Tools and Resources

#### 1. Credible case studies from seafood and other industries

**Problem it will address:**
- Access to credible, unbiased researchers to provide outside expertise

**Important considerations:**
- How can we learn quickly from other commodities like textiles and sneaker manufacture?
- The unique challenge of seafood is its global nature
- A migratory workforce is not a unique feature to seafood but it is an important one
- Government and NGOs are not seen as impartial but can and should be involved

**Next steps:**
- Research migrant labor issues in other sectors and incorporate lessons learned
- Conduct focused research to explore the scale of the problem in the seafood sector
- Align a North American working group with credible facts and statistics

#### 2. Build labor and social issues into seafood certifications

**Problem it will address:**
- Improve ease of operation and usability, add value without adding cost
- Allow stakeholders to focus on one tool that relies on a third party to assess each certification, understand the purpose and scope, and find the gaps
- Create visibility around the whole supply chain – removing some of the mysterious elements
- Ensure health, safety, sanitation for crew
- Encourage development of mitigation strategies that address social risks
- Improve alignment and buying power

**Important considerations:**
- Traceability should incorporate transparency to allow for informed decisions
- Deep dives can only be so deep without vessel monitoring and other standard activities
- Risk assessments can be conducted quickly
- Suppliers require IMO numbers, investigate what groups like ISSF are doing right
### Next steps:
- Obtain consistent information - define key data elements to collect
- Ensure different certification schemes do not undermine one another- e.g. Fair Trade has social components but does not match performance from an environmental standpoint

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<tr>
<th>3. Tool for identifying sources of high and low risk</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Problem it will address:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Tackle data gaps</td>
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<td>- Assist with personnel tracking</td>
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<td>- Improve monitoring efficiency as some sources are trusted, others are not</td>
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<td>- Put the pressure on those identified as risky to prove they are not</td>
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<td>- Improve transparency and data collection</td>
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<th>Important considerations:</th>
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<td>- Puts burden on businesses and organizations to prove trustworthy products</td>
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<td>- Who are the companies involved in these activities (trafficking)?</td>
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<td>- Who has the data needed?</td>
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<td>- Identify current risk assessments in supply chains; understand how they profile high risks, and how they focus energy in the riskiest places</td>
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<td>- Generate wider awareness of tools that assess risk of forced labor in seafood supply chains, like the Labor Safe Screen</td>
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<td>- Strengthen and expand existing programs/technology and reorient them to human rights goals</td>
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<td>- Develop database of legally registered fishermen</td>
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4. Tools to align enforcement and monitoring efforts

- Vessel manifest and checklist
- A consolidated hotline
- Electronic monitoring
- Technology - track a fisherman
- Observers - use environmental observers to also review social issues
- Trusted trader program
- Contracts - sign/stamp required for laborers- must show up and verify they are being fairly treated
- Audits of those claiming to certify good labor brokers/contractors

Problem it will address:

- Industry and government collaboration
- Traceability - need vessel information to identify whether the crew is legal
- Buying power - several large companies sourcing from one fishery

Important considerations:

- Need consensus on what to measure
- “Competent government authority” is not always the competent actor
- Government and industry action and NGO watchdogs would be helpful
- Define key indicators of risk
- Enforcement requirements are large
- Expensive, corruption, and workers under duress

Next steps:

- Gather information to identify risks and align around key indicators
- Conduct more research to explore the scale of the problem/fact gathering/supply chain mapping
- Investigate migrant labor issues in other sectors - this is not unique to seafood
Appendix III: Pre-Competitive Discussion

Goals of dialogue:
- Provide a safe space for industry to discuss openly about issues and solutions
- Level the information playing field - define information, documentation and resources that are available to the industry
- Identify common goals - no need to tackle all supply chains at once, but focus on the most vulnerable ones first
- Invite interested parties and experts to the conservation - big names in the conversation attract government and retail attention

Important considerations:
- Analysis of currently available tools vs. what will come later down the line
- Share information among the initiatives (TIP Office, IUU Yellow card process in EU, Shrimp Task Force, etc.)
- Capitalize on international partnerships - share as much as possible, there is no benefit in holding information
- Educate the industry - each piece can educate every other piece in the supply chain
- Define the role of the trade associations and food service
- The burden is on retailers, but also must involve the middle of the supply chain
- Define capacity needed in other countries to ensure people are not isolated or stranded
- There is a perspective that “it is a governmental issue”. Use financial pressure to create change within that culture
- Define clearly the scope of work and the umbrella it will operate under (sustainability?)
- Identify a clear leader and have multiple, parallel work streams splinter off
- Need core people in the room - too many stakeholders and progress will be slow (need trust and transparency)
- Share assessment tools, collaborators want transparency and to not reinvent the wheel
- Need short term and achievable next steps, small goals to get traction and show progress

Pros:
- Collective action
- Information sharing
- Support each other
- Move forward
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<th><strong>Cons:</strong></th>
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<td>• Without industry on board, the conversation is over</td>
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<td>• Too many stakeholders slows progress</td>
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<th><strong>Participants:</strong></th>
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<td>• Industry, government, and NGOs to co-host</td>
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<td>• Companies willing to speak to the challenges - not to force it on others, but to convey that we are all at risk</td>
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<td>• Seafood companies, especially national brands that have buying power</td>
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<td>• Textile industry representatives</td>
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<td>• Trade associations</td>
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<td>• Federal government, State Department, and development agencies</td>
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<td>• Advocacy groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Form a small group to learn from textiles or other industries</td>
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<td>• Start with a very narrow objective - start with biggest hot spot, biggest risk, but with a focus on overall legislation</td>
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<td>• Encourage updates across stakeholders (e.g. NFI and NGOs to update each other)</td>
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<td>• Federal procurement policies</td>
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<td>• Add advisor groups to the conversations that trade associations are having (e.g. food waste) with core industry representatives and NGOs</td>
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<td>• Communicate with Seafish to learn from their experiences establishing a working group in the UK and explore alignment</td>
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<td>• Brainstorm ideas about collaboration between buyers and those looking at promoting sustainable seafood</td>
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